Central Assistance to States

*347. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA :

SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Planning Commission have decided to review the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula for allocation of Central Assistance to States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether several States are unhappy on the allocation of Central Assistance due to Gadgil-Mukherjee formula; and

(d) if so, the details of representations received in this regard and further action taken thereon ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) to (d) The Planning Commission has received proposals from various State Governments to amend the existing Gadgil formula for allocating Normal Central Assistance to State Plans. There is wide divergence in the views amongst the States in this regard. In general, while the advanced States have sought higher weightage for performance, the less advanced States have sought higher weightage for backwardness. This issue was considered in a meeting of the Full Planning Commission held on 27th and 29th June 2001. Since revision in the Formula requires the approval of National Development Council (NDC), it was decided that given the difference of opinion among the State Governments and the sensitivity of this issue, it was necessary to discuss this further and evolve a consensus before alternatives are considered by the NDC.

Ceiling on bonus

*348. SHRI JIBON ROY : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that upper ceiling of the guaranteed bonus for the industrial workers has not been changed since last decades;

(b) the details of the upper ceiling stipulated when the Bonus Act was passed with corresponding Consumer Price Index and the current upper ceiling with the corresponding Consumer Price Index; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to withdraw upper ceiling on payment of bonus ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SHARAD YADAV) : (a) to (c) The Payment of Bonus Act was enacted in 1965. Originally the Act provided for an eligibility limit of Rs. 1600 p.m. of wages and calculation ceiling of Rs. 750 p.m. which were raised to Rs. 2500 and Rs. 1600 respectively in 1985 (w.e.f. 7-11-85). The ceilings were subsequently raised to Rs. 3500 and Rs. 2500 respectively in 1995, effective 1-4-93. The Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers (base 1960 = 100) for the year 1965 was 132 and for 1985, it was 625. The index as on 1-4-93 with new CPI base (1982) was 243 which when converted to 1960 base comes to 1198. The latest CPI at 1982 base is 468 for the month of October, 2001 which works out to 2307 at 1960 base.

The Government is seized of the demand regarding the amendment of Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 for raising the eligibility and calculation ceilings. The issue is under examination in the light of its wide ranging repercussions as the benefits of bonus will have to be extended to, besides the Private Sector, to the employees of PSUs (both Central and States), Central and State Governments and autonomous organizations resulting in huge financial burden to the Government exchequer.

New passport offices in North-Eastern States

*349. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to open new passport offices and collection centres in Assam and other North-Eastern States;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

It is the endeavour of the Government to extend passport issue facilities to every State of India. The Government has decided to extend the facility of issuance of passports at the capitals of the North-Eastern States.. However, since the volume of applications from the North-Eastern States (except Assam) is very low, it is proposed to authorize the concerned State Governments for issuance of passports.